

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

TO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

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AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAO PAULO 2684

RIO FOR SHEA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PINS, BR

SUBJECT: DURING U.S. VISIT, SAO PAULO METALWORKERS' LEADER

CAUTIONS UAW AGAINST PUBLICLY PROTESTING OCTOBER SAO PAULO

LABOR ARRESTS

1. LABOFF SPOKE WITH SAO PAULO METALWORKER'S FEDERATION PRESIDENT ARGEU EGYDIO DOS SANTOS ON DECEMBER 12 FOLLOWING LATTER'S RETURN TO BRAZIL AFTER MONTH-LONG DEPARTMENT OF LABOR SPONSORED SEMINAR IN WASHINGTON AND OTHER U.S. CITIES. WHILE IN WASHINGTON, ARGEU SAID HE HAD SPOKEN WITH ESTEBAN TORRES, UAW ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, CONCERNING THE EARLY OCTOBER ARRESTS OF SEVERAL SAO PAULO LABOR LEADERS INCLUDING MANOEL CONSTANTINO AND JOSE FERREIRA DA SILVA, RESPECTIVELY PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SAO CAETANO METALWORKERS' UNION, FOR THEIR ALLEGED COMMUNIST TIES. (COMMENT: CONSTANTINO HAS SINCE BEEN RELEASED PENDING TRIAL BUT DA SILVA REMAINS IN PRISON.)

2. ACCORDING TO ARGEU, TORRES, WHOM HE FOUND WELL BRIEFED ON ARRESTS, ASKED IF PUBLIC STATEMENT BY THE UAW PROTESTING THE ARRESTS WOULD BE HELPFUL. ARGEU SAID HE RESPONDED THAT NEITHER THE UAW NOR THE METALWORKERS ITS, FOR THAT MATTER, SHOULD ATTEMPT ANY PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON BEHALF OF THE PRISONERS.

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SUCH A GESTURE, HE TOLD TORRES, WOULD DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING

TO SPEED THE RELEASE OF THOSE DETAINED. MOREOVER, THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD INEVITABLY LINK HIS TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES WITH ANY SUBSEQUENT PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT BY THE UAW, A DEDUCTION THAT WOULD GUARANTEE PROBLEMS FOR HIM WITH THE AUTHORITIES UPON HIS RETURN TO BRAZIL. ARGEU SAID HE BELIEVED THAT HIS PLEA PERSUADED TORRES AND THE UAW TO SHELVE ANY PLANS THEY MAY HAVE HAD PUBLICLY TO CRITICIZE THE ARRESTS.

3. ARGEU OBSERVED THAT HIS MONTH'S ABSENCE IN THE UNITED STATES WAS FORTUITOUS SINCE HE WAS SPARED OF HAVING TO BECOME DEEPLY ENMESHED IN THE THORNY, INTERNAL FEDERATION PRESSURES PROVOKED BY THE ARRESTS. HE EXPLAINED THAT HIS OPPORTUNE AMERICAN SOJOURN ENABLED HIM TO AVOID HAVING TO SAY NO TO THOSE IN THE FEDERATION'S MORE MILITANT AFFILIATES IN SAO PAULO'S INDUSTRIAL SUBURBS (WHICH HAVE LONG OPPOSED HIS LEADERSHIP ANYWAY) WHO WANTED THE METALWORKERS' FEDERATION TO TAKE A STRONGER STAND AGAINST THE ARRESTS. ARGEU WENT ON TO REPEAT HIS EARLIER ALLEGATION TO LABOFF THAT THOSE DETAINED, INCLUDING CONSTANTINO, DID HAVE SOME TIES, "VINCULACOES" WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY, AND, THEREFORE, THAT HE WOULD HAVE BEEN ON WEAK GROUND IN PROTESTING THEIR ARRESTS IN ANY EVENT.

4. ARGEU SAID HE DID NOT SPEAK SUBSTANTIVELY ABOUT THE ARRESTS WITH EITHER AIFLD OR AFL-CIO OFFICIALS WHILE IN WASHINGTON.
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